



June 11, 2023

Ordinary Time—the Holy Body & Blood of Christ

*Just as the living Father sent me,
and I have life because of the Father,
So also, the one who feeds on me will have life because of me.
John 6:57*



Dear Friends,

In our passage from chapter six of the Gospel of John, Jesus is preaching a homily based in the Scripture story of the manna that fed the children of Israel in the desert. The story speaks of how God sustains the people by something that was new and unfamiliar. The manna tradition represents the Torah (Law) which truly sustains the people as they journey along the paths of time.

The controversy that is aroused by Jesus is not that they took Jesus' statement literally, *"unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood."* They know that Jesus is speaking figuratively. He is not inviting them to something that sounds disgusting or impossible. They understand the image. What they object to is that Jesus is not using the biblical tradition to interpret the story. Rather he is saying that he personally surpasses the deficiencies of the manna tradition. Not all will agree that Jesus is the fulfillment of and substitute for the Torah, the living word of God. That is what fuels the controversy.

What is Jesus trying to say with this bread of life imagery? When we think about it eating and drinking are essential for life and what we eat becomes part of us. Food literally becomes our flesh and blood. By comparing our reception of Jesus to ingesting food reveals his desire for an intimate connection. He expresses it by saying *"I dwell in you."* Amazingly he adds, *"and you dwell in me."* This is an invitation to the life of God expressed in the Holy Trinity.

Last week we described the Love that is God as Trinity—Three faces of love each perfectly emptying out love into another and back again, one continuous flow. That love overflows the Trinity, and we call that overflow "grace." That grace creates all that is, and God calls it good. That grace takes flesh in Jesus in his Incarnation. He is the human face of God's love. All this teaches us that God is not someone to be afraid of, but God is at the core of our very being and on our side. Our sharing in the Eucharistic Meal is an invitation to be transformed into the communion of the Trinity.

The Eucharist is not meant to be our personal possession. To eat Christ, we must become food for him, found in others especially the outcast. We fail the Eucharist when we just take communion and not enter communion with one another. *"Just as the Father is in me, and I live in the Father, so the one who eats me will live forever."* Every time we receive the Risen One in Eucharist we ought to be perfected in his self-giving image.

Every communion should make us grow in love with others. The Eucharist should make us aware that every grain of wheat, every cluster of grapes, the water, the air, and every creature is part of Christ's body. The Grace of God spills over into creation, that grace spills over in the Incarnation of Jesus the Christ, the grace of Christ spills over in the Church nourished by the Eucharistic Christ. We live in a world infused with grace.

This year the United States Bishops are calling for a Eucharistic revival. In September the Diocese will have a congress devoted to the Eucharist. And here we hope to have some small groups reflecting on *"Becoming a Eucharistic People."* We also hope to revive the practice of sharing in the Eucharistic Cup. May we have a Eucharistic reverence for all that exists!

Peace,

Fr Ron

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